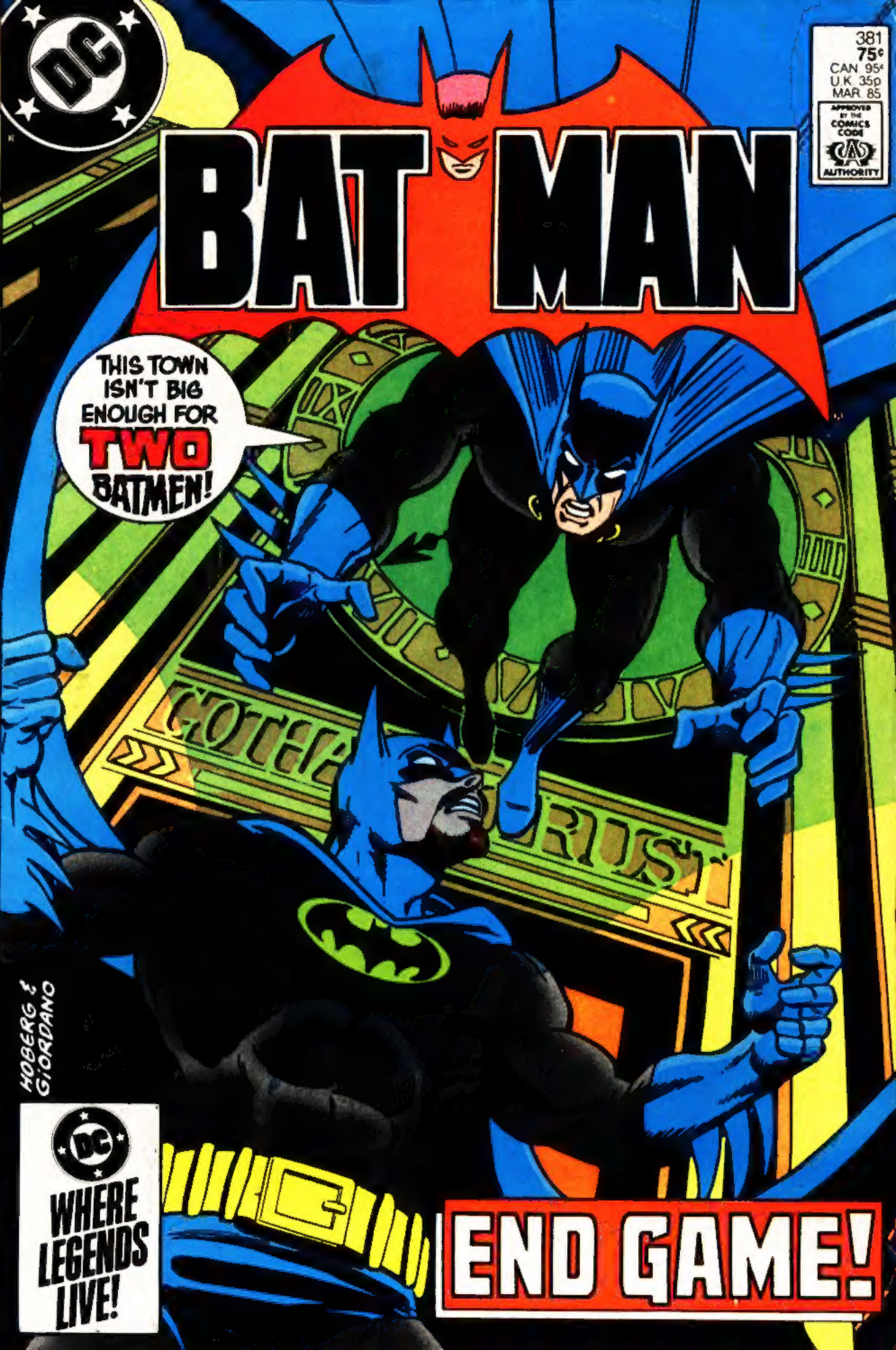
DC
BAT MAN
381
75¢
CAN 95¢
U.K. 35p
MAR 85
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THIS TOWN ISN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR TWO BATMEN!
GOTHA
RUST
HOBERG & GIORDANO
DC
WHERE LEGENDS LIVE!
END GAME!

POLICE OFFICER RAYMOND GAMRONSKI HAS ELECTED TO MAKE THAT FATEFUL MOVE CALLED "BENDING ONE'S HUMOR INTO A DEFENSIVE MECHANISM."
YOU SEE, ON OMINOUS NIGHTS LIKE THIS HE NORMALLY HUMS EITHER VERDI OR SINATRA, WONDERING WHY HE'S POLISH INSTEAD OF ITALIAN... BUT TONIGHT, KNOWING DAMNED WELL HE'S A COP--
--HE TRIES OUT THE ABSURDLY GOOFY THEME FROM "DRAGNET."
OFFICER? I... I CAN'T SEE YOU...
EH--?
BUT IF YOU ARE A POLICEMAN, I...I HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO TELL YOU...
YEAH, I'M A POLICEMAN.
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM, MISS?
HE'S STRONG NOW, AND... HE'S BEEN GOING OUT AT NIGHT... AND...
I...I LIVE IN A SHACK...ON THE RIVER, JUST A FEW BLOCKS FROM HERE.
I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO LIVE THERE, BUT... WELL, TWO WEEKS AGO, CERBERUS AND I--CERBERUS IS MY DOG--WE FOUND A WOUNDED MAN...
...AND WE NURSED HIM BACK TO HEALTH.
... AND CERBERUS AND I HAVE FOUND OUT THAT...
...H-HE'S A THIEF.
I SEE, MISS.
DO YOU KNOW THIS MAN'S NAME?
Y-YES. HE... HE SAID HE WAS...
... THE BATMAN.
DUM DA DUM-DUM, INDEED.

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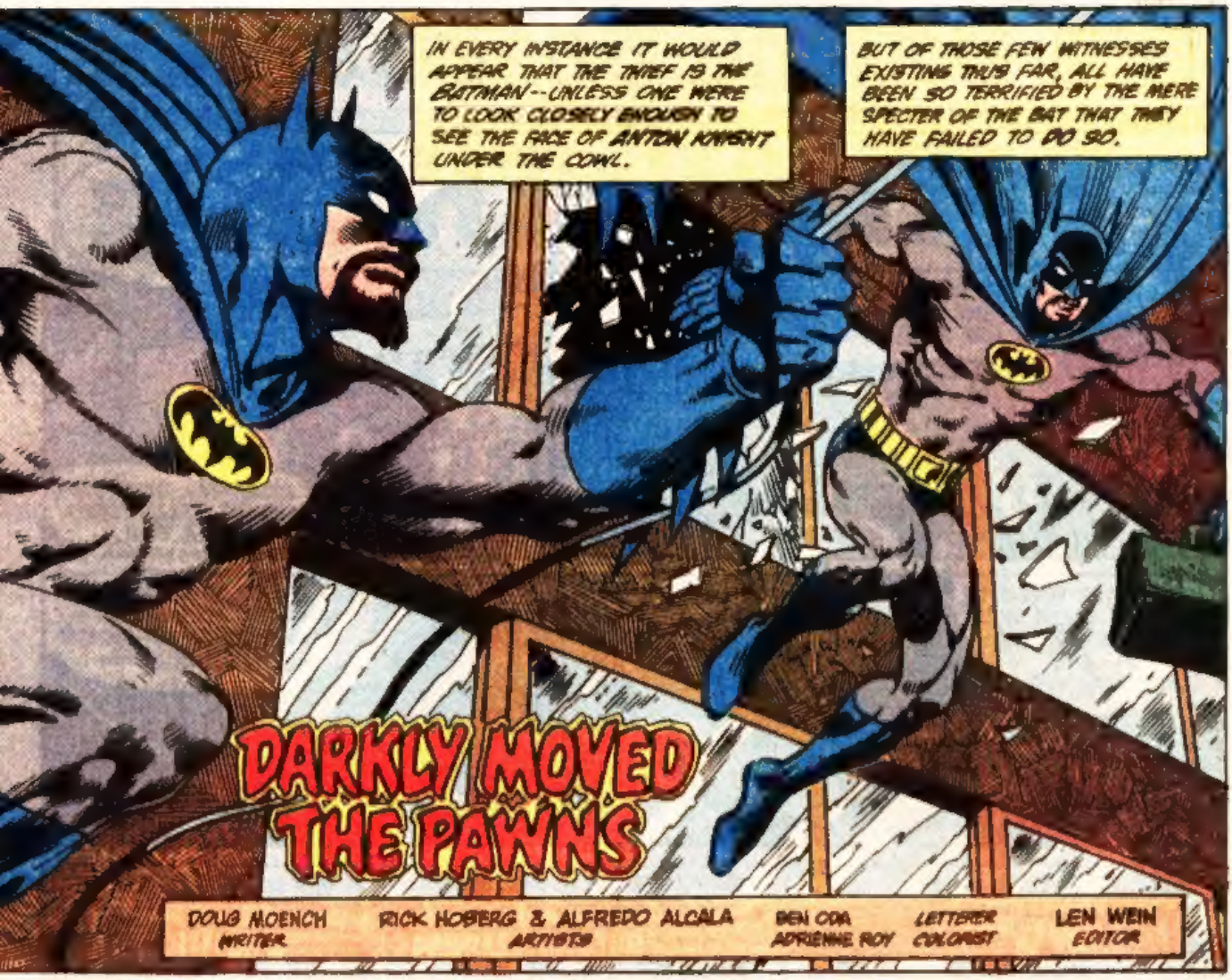
BAT MAN
DURING THE PAST THREE NIGHTS, NINE THEFTS -- NETTING CLOSE TO $400,000 IN CASH, JEWELRY, AND RARE COINS -- HAVE BEEN FLAWLESSLY COMMITTED.
... IS NOT THE BATMAN...
STOLEN GOODS, ALL RIGHT...
... AND I KNOW THE NEWS IS SCREAMING ABOUT BATMAN TURNING BAD...
2
... BUT I FIGURED IT WAS JUST ONE OF MAYOR HILL'S POLITICAL TRICKS. DO YOU HAVE ANY PROOF THAT THE MAN WHO BURIED THIS LOOT BEHIND YOUR SHACK IS ACTUALLY THE BATMAN?
JUST THE FACT THAT HE'D BEEN SHOT... THAT HE GOES OUT AT NIGHT... AND HIS WORD.
GRRRRRR
YOU'VE SEEN TOO MUCH, TINA.
HOLY...!


IN EVERY INSTANCE IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE THIEF IS THE BATMAN--UNLESS ONE WERE TO LOOK CLOSELY ENOUGH TO SEE THE FACE OF ANTON KNIGHT UNDER THE COWL.
BUT OF THOSE FEW WITNESSES EXISTING THUS FAR, ALL HAVE BEEN SO TERRIFIED BY THE MERE SPECTER OF THE BAT THAT THEY HAVE FAILED TO DO SO.
DARKLY MOVED THE PAWNS
DOUG MOENCH WRITER
RICK HOBERG & ALFREDO ALCALA ARTISTS
BEN ODA ADRIENNE ROY
LETTERER COLORIST
LEN WEIN EDITOR

AND YOU, COP, ARE BLIND!
BUT NO MATTER THAT YOU'VE BETRAYED ME, TINA, JUST LIKE MY OTHER LOVER IN DARKNESS...

AT LEAST YOU WON'T MURDER ME, AS SHE DID...
NAKT
NUKK

...BECAUSE I'M ALREADY DEAD, TINA...
YARK

...DEAD AND GONE FOREVER.
AND TINA'S BLIND INFATUATIONS ARE SHATTERED BY A SHRIEKING TRUTH: HER SHINING PRINCE IS A CRACK AND DANGEROUS VILLAIN.

Gotham Gazette

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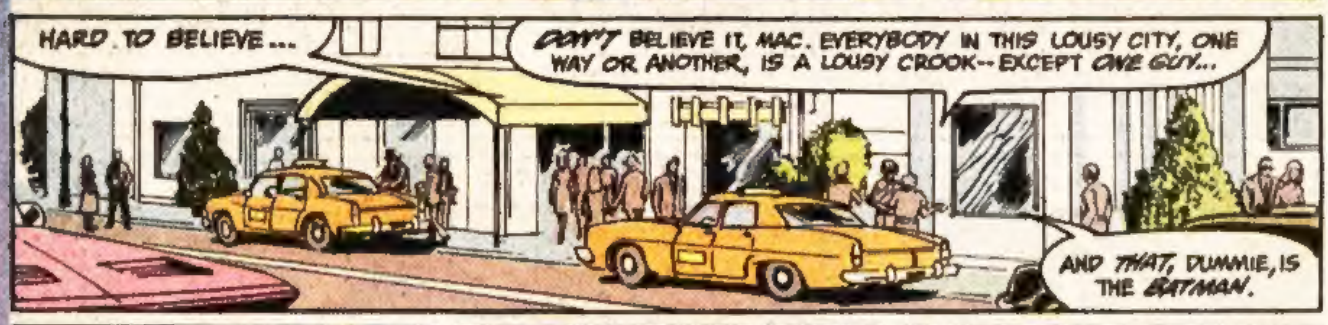
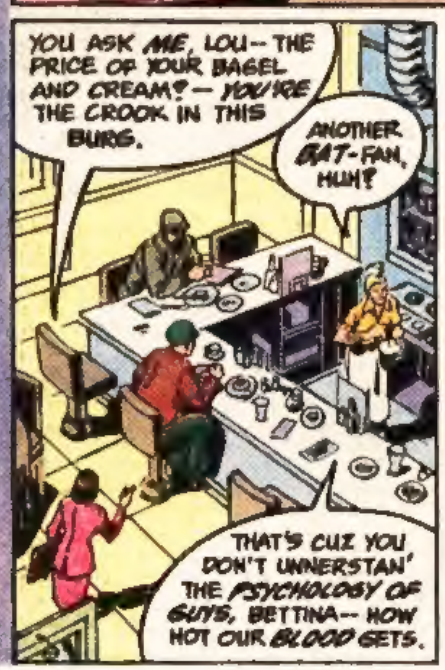
BATMAN: THIEF

SO WHADDA YOU THINK ABOUT ALL THIS JOE?
NO WAY.
MUGGERS TRIED TO RIP OFF THIS STAND ONE NIGHT LAST YEAR -- BATMAN SQUASHED 'EM AND SAVED ME STITCHES.
LONG KNIFE.
REMEMBER WATERGATE? GET SET FOR BATGATE. YOU'LL SEE.

SO HAS THE VIGILANTE REALLY TAKEN THE LAW INTO HIS OWN HANDS -- AND THROTTLED IT?
MAYBE.
BUT I DETECT A STRONG WHIFF OF MACHIAVELLI -- REINCARNATED AS MAYOR HAMILTON HILL.


HARD TO BELIEVE...
DON'T BELIEVE IT, MAC. EVERYBODY IN THIS LOUSY CITY, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, IS A LOUSY CROOK -- EXCEPT ONE GUY...
AND THAT, DUMMIE, IS THE BATMAN.


YOU ASK ME, LOU -- THE PRICE OF YOUR BAGEL AND CREAM? -- YOU'RE THE CROOK IN THIS BURG.
ANOTHER BAT-FAN, HUH?
THAT'S CUZ YOU DON'T UNNERSTAN' THE PSYCHOLOGY OF GUYS, BETTINA -- HOW HOT OUR BLOOD GETS.

CATCHIN' THUGS IN THE DARK OR BEATIN' 'EM AT THEIR OWN GAME, IT'S ALL THE SAME TO A GUY WHO'S HUNG ON DOIN' DANGEROUS THINGS AT NIGHT -- LIKE A KIND OF DOPE, YA KNOW?
I REMEMBER THOSE SUMMER NIGHTS MYSELF --

-- FROM BEIN' A KID IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACROSS THE BAY, WHEN NOTHIN' BEATS IT FOR THE BLOOD. BATMAN JUST NEVER GREW UP, THAT'S ALL.
THE FINAL WORD, FROM MR. MATURITY HIMSELF.
4

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

HAVING WORKED LATE, A SOMEWHAT NERVOUS AMANDA GROSCI LEAVES THE CHILD WELFARE BUREAU TO WALK DARK STREETS, HEADING FOR THE RITZ-CARLTON TO SEE HOW JASON TODD IS FARING WITH NATALIA KNIGHT.

NOW THAT I'M CONVINCED JASON WOULD BE HAPPIER WITH *BRUCE WAYNE*, I HOPE I HAVEN'T MADE *TOO* TERRIBLE A MISTAKE...

OH, NATALIA KNIGHT'S A GOOD ENOUGH WOMAN AND EVENTUALLY SHE'LL MAKE A *FINE* MOTHER, I'M SURE, BUT...

WELL, AT LEAST I DON'T BELIEVE SHE'S THIS CRIMINAL *NOCTURNA*, IN CAHOOTS WITH NIGHT-THEF OR NIGHT-SLAYER OR WHATEVER HE IS.

THE BATMAN *MAY CLAIM* SHE IS, BUT NOW THEY'RE SAYING *HE'S* A CROOK.

THAT DOESN'T SEEM LIKELY *EITHER*, ALTHOUGH HE *DOES* SCARE ME ...JUST THE THOUGHT THAT HE COULD BE *ANYWHERE* AT NIGHT...

...WATCHING YOU AT *ANY MOMENT* WITHOUT YOU EVER BEING *AWARE* OF IT... READY TO *POUNCE*...

THEIR SPIRITS LOW, THEIR BODIES DRAINED, THEY RETURN TO THE RITZ-CARLTON...

LET'S FACE IT, ROBIN, THERE'S NO SIGN OF BATMAN-- OR "BATMAN" *EITHER*, FOR THAT MATTER-- AND WE'VE TURNED GOTHAM *UPSIDE-DOWN*.

YEAH-- IT'S LIKE THE TWO OF THEM ARE *INVISIBLE* OUT THERE IN THE DARK, NOCTURNA...

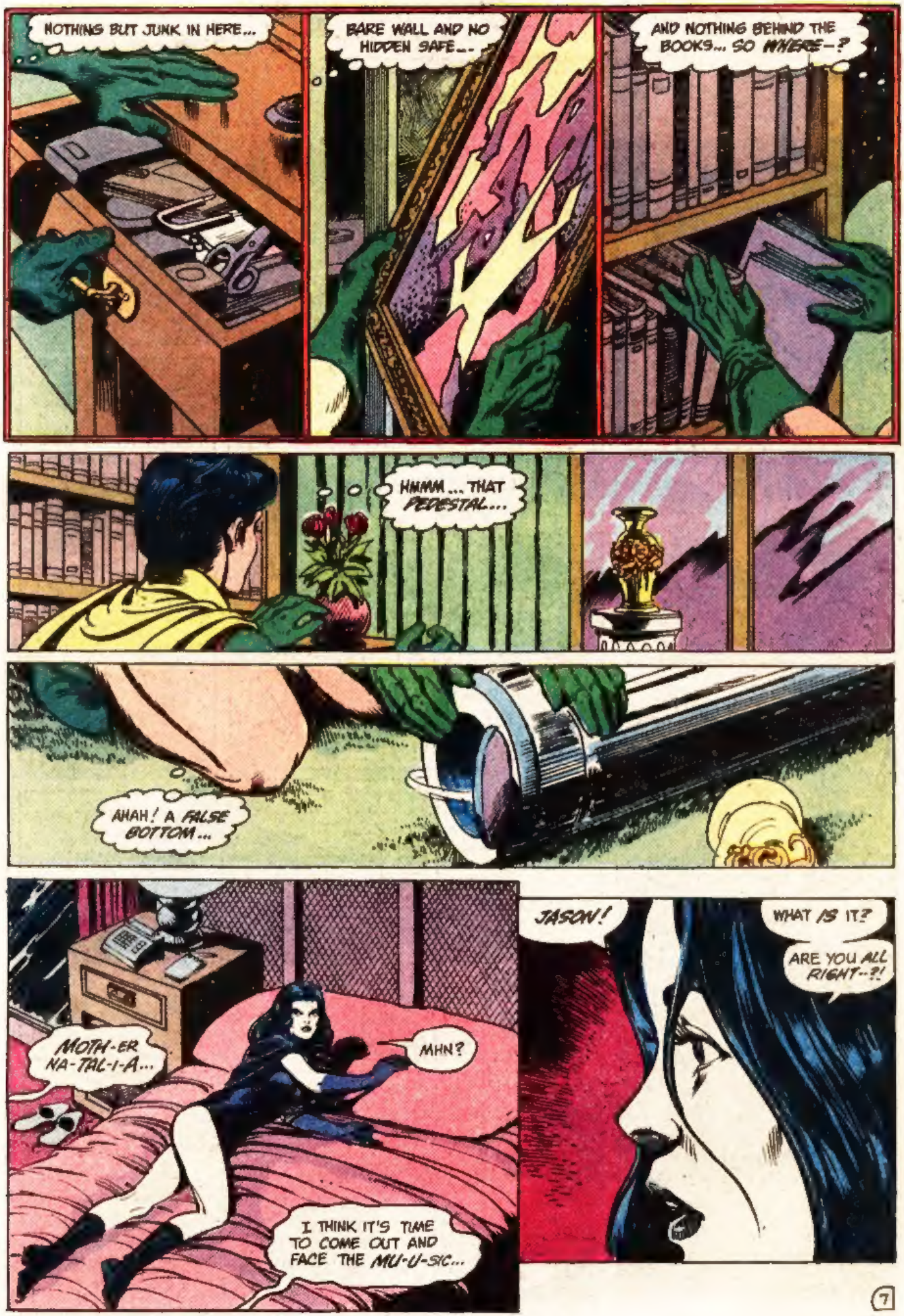
...AND I'M JUST STARTING TO REALIZE HOW *BIG* THIS CITY *IS*.

BUT I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE HOW ANTON KNIGHT AND BRUCE WAYNE HAVE "CHANGED PLACES"-- ANTON BECOMING "BATMAN" AND BRUCE BECOMING "NIGHT-SLAYER."

IT'S ... *INSANE*.

THEY ENTER THE PENTHOUSE SUITE...

BUT ANTON'S CRAZY LIKE A FOX, WHILE BRUCE'S MIND MAY BE REALLY DAMAGED--THAT GUNSHOT CREASING HIS SKULL... AND THE WAY HE BELIEVED HE WAS NIGHT-SLAYER...
WE'VE BEEN THROUGH IT A THOUSAND TIMES, JASON, WITH ALMOST NO REST IN FOUR NIGHTS NOW...
YOU MAY SEE YOURSELF AS ROBIN, BUT I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR YOU AS MY SON...
IT'S WEIRD, BUT I THINK I LIKE YOU MORE AS NOCTURNA THAN AS NATALIA.
AT LEAST NOCTURNA AND ROBIN MAKE A HALFWAY DECENT TEAM--NOT AS GOOD AS BATMAN AND ROBIN, BUT AT LEAST WE WERE OUT THERE TRYING TO DO SOMETHING...
...AND NOW YOU TURN INTO A MOTHER ON ME, INSISTING I EAT RIGHT AND GET PROPER AMOUNTS OF SLEEP AND--
WAS BRUCE WAYNE ANY DIFFERENT IN THAT RESPECT, JASON?
WELL...NO.
BUT NOTHING LIKE THIS EVER CAME UP--WE WERE GOOD ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH EVERYTHING FAST--BEFORE "BEDTIME."
I AM NOT THE BATMAN, AND YOU AND I ARE LESS THAN A PERFECT TEAM--WHETHER AS NOCTURNA AND ROBIN OR MOTHER AND SON...
...BUT IT IS STILL "BEDTIME."
SO PLEASE--GET SOME SLEEP.
FINALLY!
SHE'S TOO EXHAUSTED TO PLAY ATTENTIVE MOTHER--LETTING ME TOSS THIS JOINT AND SET THE GOONS ON HER ONCE AND FOR ALL!
6


NOTHING BUT JUNK IN HERE...
BARE WALL AND NO HIDDEN SAFE...
AND NOTHING BEHIND THE BOOKS... SO WHERE-?
HMMM... THAT PEDESTAL...
AHAH! A FALSE BOTTOM...
MOTH-ER NA-TAL-I-A...
MHN?
I THINK IT'S TIME TO COME OUT AND FACE THE MU-U-SIC...
JASON!
WHAT IS IT?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT--?!

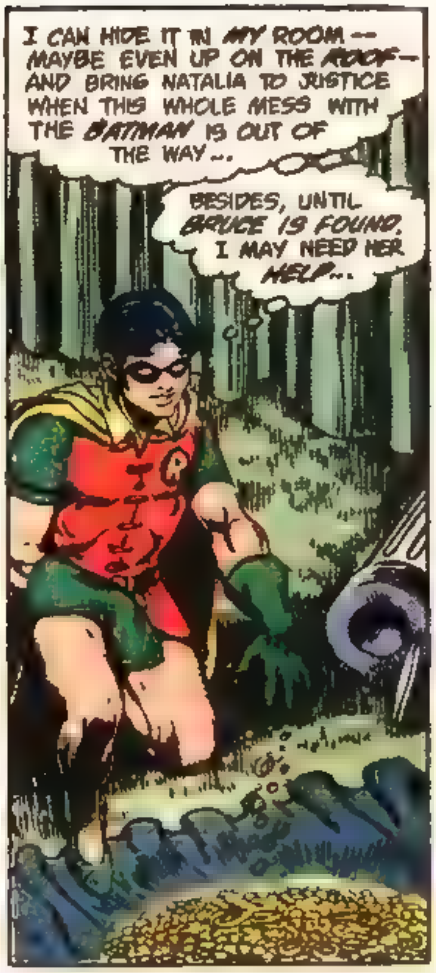
I'M FEELING GREAT NOCTURNA, BUT YOU'RE IN THE SOUP.
PROOF.
YOUR LILY-WHITE HANDS HAVE JUST TURNED VERY RED.
ENOUGH HERE TO COVER THE RENT ON THIS SPIFFY PENTHOUSE FOR YEARS, ISN'T THERE, NOCTURNA?
TOO BAD COMMISSIONER GORDON'S GONNA COME AND TAKE IT ALL AWAY-- RIGHT AFTER I PHONE HIM.
JASON, I'M DOING MY BEST FOR YOU.
YEAH? EXCEPT MY LOVE CAN'T BE BOUGHT, LADY, NOT WITH THIS.
BESIDES, DO YOU REALLY THINK THIS PENTHOUSE IS ANY BETTER THAN WAYNE MANOR? AND WOULD A KID FROM THE CIRCUS EVEN CARE?
AND WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO WHEN THERE'S NONE OF THIS LEFT TO FENCE?
GO OUT AND PROVIDE FOR ME BY BEING A WAITRESS?
JASON, I... I'M AN ASTRONOMER...
YEAH, SURE -- FLY ME TO THE MOON, LADY.
YOU'RE A THIEF AND YOU KNOW IT -- REFORMED ONLY AS LONG AS THE BILLS ARE PAID.
8

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

I SWEAR TO YOU, JASON-- I WILL NEVER STEAL AGAIN.
ISN'T THAT SUPPOSED TO BE MY LINE, "MOM"?
AND EVEN IF I BELIEVED YOU, THERE'S STILL THE PAST TO PAY FOR -- AND I'M GONNA CALL GORDON AND SEE THAT YOU DO.
NOW ARE YOU GONNA TRY TO STOP ME?
I... NO, JASON...
I WON'T TRY TO STOP YOU.
DO WHAT YOU MUST-- DO WHAT'S IN YOUR HEART.
AND SHE LEAVES, BEFORE THE TEARS COME.
HE STARES DOWN AT THE BRIGHT SPILL OF LOOT.
THEN AT THE COLD PHONE.
AND SLOWLY HE REACHES FOR IT...
... WHILE IN HER TOO-ELEGANT BEDROOM, NOCTURNA STARES NUMBLY AT THE EXTENSION, WONDERING HOW SHE HAS FAILED... AND EXPECTING THE WORST...
9

BUT IN THE END, JASON CANNOT BRING HIMSELF TO DELIVER IT...
AW, NUTS.
NO SENSE IN DISTURBING GORDON AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT...

THE LOOT'LL KEEP.. AND SO WILL NOCTURNA.

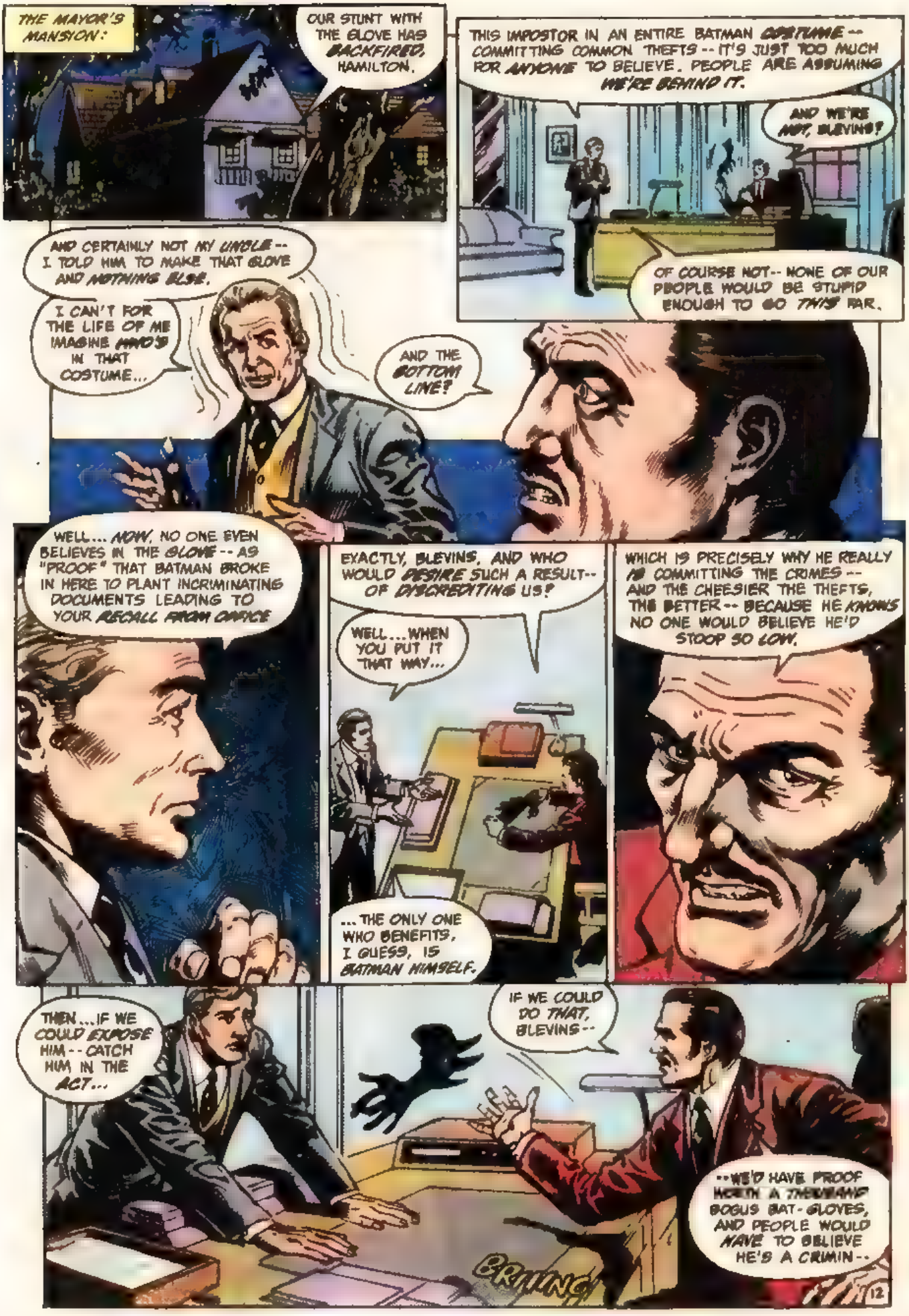

I CAN HIDE IT IN MY ROOM -- MAYBE EVEN UP ON THE ROOF-- AND BRING NATALIA TO JUSTICE WHEN THIS WHOLE MESS WITH THE BATMAN IS OUT OF THE WAY...
BESIDES, UNTIL BRUCE IS FOUND, I MAY NEED HER HELP...

...AND I JUST WISH THERE WAS SOME WAY TO CONVINCE THE COURTS SHE'S AN UNFIT MOTHER-- SO THEY'LL SEND ME BACK TO BRUCE WITHOUT PUTTING HER IN PRISON.
AFTER ALL, SHE'S NOT REALLY A BAD CHICK...

THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT IF JASON WANTS MAKE THAT CALL. IF I HAVEN'T EARNED HIS LOVE BY NOW, I NEVER WILL -- AND NO DOUBT I WAS A FOOL TO THINK A WOMAN LIKE ME COULD EVER PLAY MOTHER...
THAT'S FAR ENOUGH, NOCTURNA.

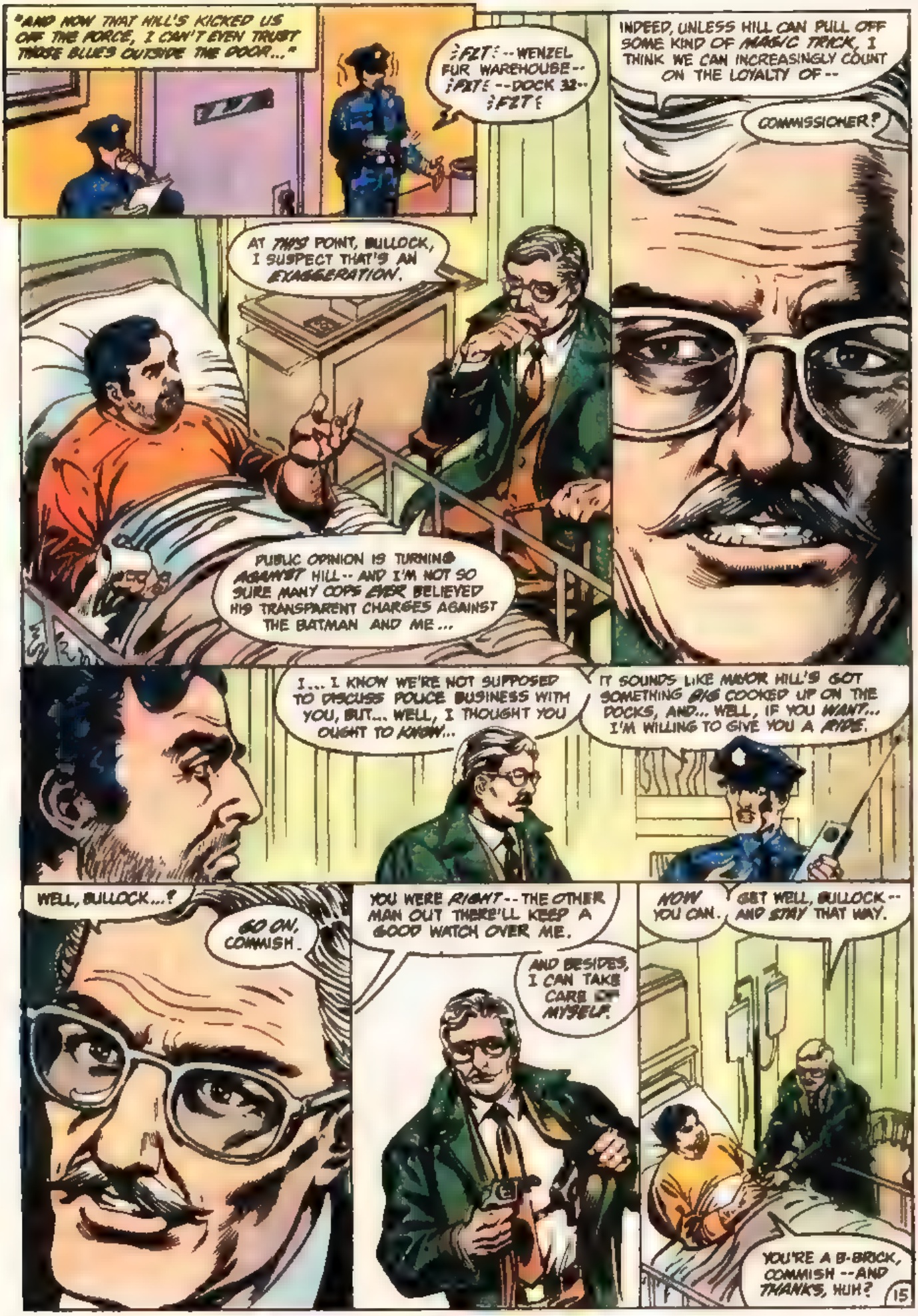
WHO--?
IF YOU REALLY DO LOVE ME... YOU'LL BE NEEDING THOSE CLOTHES.

AND FIVE MINUTES LATER --
OH MY GOD--!
--AMANDA BROSCH FINALLY REACHES THE RITZ-CARLTON.
NOT ONLY DID I MAKE TERRIBLE MISTAKE... BUT THE BATMAN WAS RIGHT!
NATALIA KNIGHT REALLY IS THE CRIMINAL PARTNER OF NIGHT-SLAYER!
LESS THAN AN HOUR LATER...
WINZEL FUR WAREHOUSE
ROBIN AND I SEARCHED FOUR NIGHTS -- AND YOU FOUND HIM IN A HALF-HOUR.
YOU MUST HAVE SOME KIND OF RADAR ATTUNED TO THAT COSTUME ... BUT WHY IS HE JUST STARING AT THAT FUR WAREHOUSE?
WHAT'S HE WAITING FOR? IT'S AN EASY JOB -- JUST PRY THE HASP ON THE SIDE DOOR'S PADLOCK, AND--
IT'S THURSDAY.
THURSDAY?
THE REGULAR DELIVERY TRUCK ARRIVES FROM CANADA SOMETIME BETWEEN SEVEN AND MIDNIGHT-- EVERY THURSDAY.
THEN WHY DON'T WE TAKE HIM NOW-- BEFORE THE FUR SHIPMENT ARRIVES?
BECAUSE THERE MAY BE TIME FOR SOMETHING BETTER, SOMETHING I'VE PONDERED FOR DAYS... AND NIGHTS.
COME -- I'LL NEED YOUR HELP.
11


THE MAYOR'S MANSION:
OUR STUNT WITH THE GLOVE HAS BACKFIRED, HAMILTON.
THIS IMPOSTOR IN AN ENTIRE BATMAN COSTUME -- COMMITTING COMMON THEFTS -- IT'S JUST TOO MUCH FOR ANYONE TO BELIEVE. PEOPLE ARE ASSUMING WE'RE BEHIND IT.
AND WE'RE NOT, BLEVINS?
OF COURSE NOT -- NONE OF OUR PEOPLE WOULD BE STUPID ENOUGH TO GO THIS FAR.
AND CERTAINLY NOT MY UNCLE -- I TOLD HIM TO MAKE THAT GLOVE AND NOTHING ELSE.
I CAN'T FOR THE LIFE OF ME IMAGINE WHO'S IN THAT COSTUME...
AND THE BOTTOM LINE?
WELL... NOW, NO ONE EVEN BELIEVES IN THE GLOVE -- AS "PROOF" THAT BATMAN BROKE IN HERE TO PLANT INCRIMINATING DOCUMENTS LEADING TO YOUR RECALL FROM OFFICE
EXACTLY, BLEVINS, AND WHO WOULD DESIRE SUCH A RESULT -- OF DISCREDITING US?
WELL... WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY...
... THE ONLY ONE WHO BENEFITS, I GUESS, IS BATMAN HIMSELF.
WHICH IS PRECISELY WHY HE REALLY IS COMMITTING THE CRIMES -- AND THE CHEESIER THE THEFTS, THE BETTER -- BECAUSE HE KNOWS NO ONE WOULD BELIEVE HE'D STOOP SO LOW.
THEN... IF WE COULD EXPOSE HIM -- CATCH HIM IN THE ACT...
IF WE COULD DO THAT, BLEVINS --
-- WE'D HAVE PROOF WORTH A THOUSAND BOGUS BAT-GLOVES, AND PEOPLE WOULD HAVE TO BELIEVE HE'S A CRIMIN --
BRRING!
12

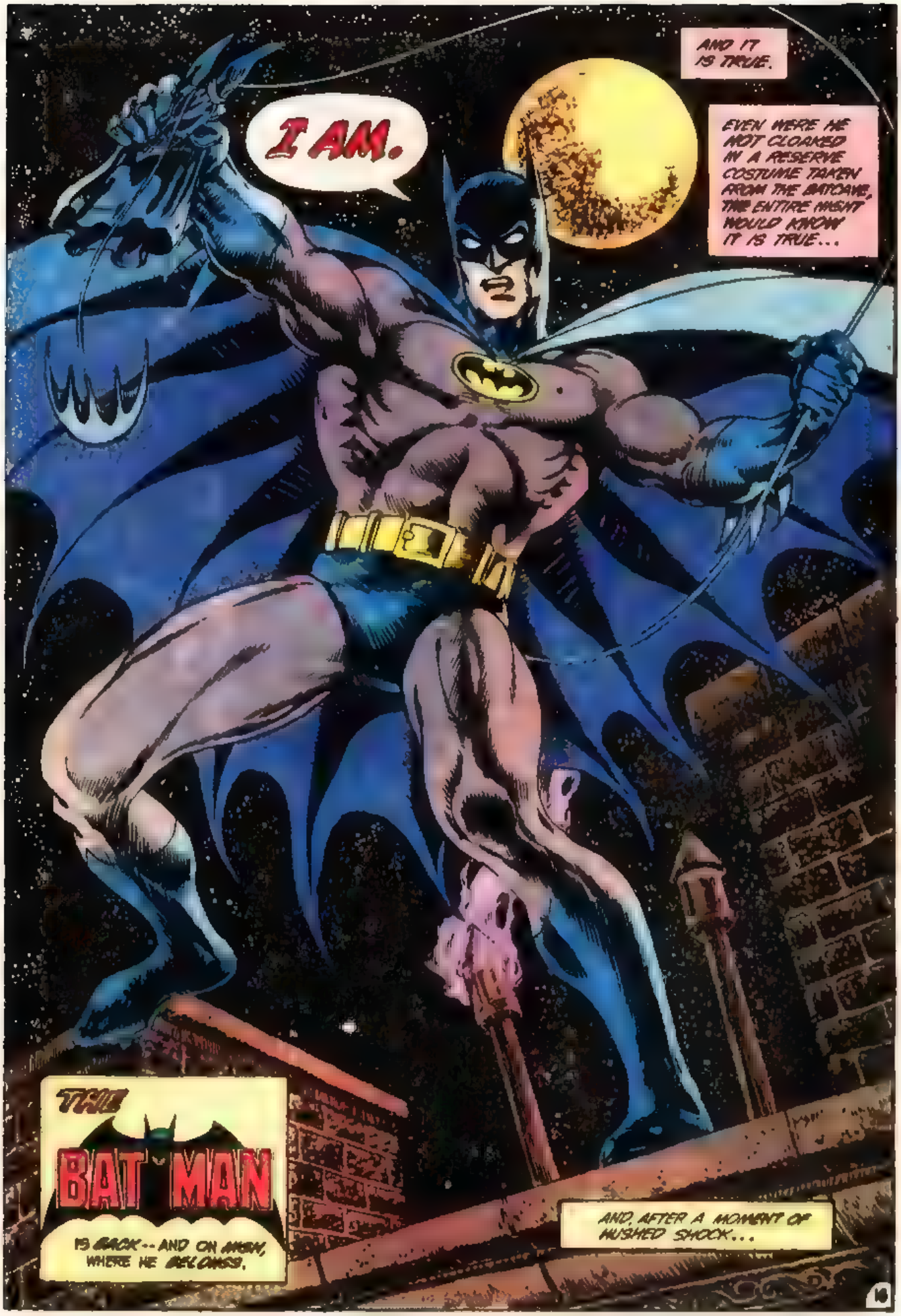
YES... YES... YOU DON'T SAY... UH-HUH... AND WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE YOU?... I SEE... WHERE?... AND WHEN?... AND WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GET FROM--
VERY WELL, IF THE INFORMATION PROVES ACCURATE, FAVORS WILL BE DUE.
SEEMS SOMETHING HAS BACKFIRED ON BATMAN -- THE DEATH OF OUR FRIEND, DR. FANG.
THAT WAS A WOMAN -- AN EVEN CLOSER FRIEND OF FANG.
SEEMS SHE WAS PRESENT AT THE DEATH SCENE --
--IN THE NEXT ROOM, ALTHOUGH BATMAN WAS NOT AWARE OF IT... AND IT ALSO SEEMS SHE OVERHEARD BATMAN AND ROBIN DISCUSSING PLANS TO DISCREDIT US--INCLUDING A CERTAIN OPERATION TO TAKE PLACE TONIGHT.
NATURALLY, SHE WISHES TO SEE JUSTICE DONE. CALL THE MEDIA, BLEVINS, AND TELL THEM THIS IS WORTHY OF THEIR STARS.
YES, SIR!
OH YES -- AND DON'T FORGET THE POLICE TOO.
THANK YOU, NOCTURNA -- THAT'S ALL THE ASSISTANCE I'LL NEED.
TELEPHONE
YOU CAN GO HOME NOW... TO... YOUR SON.
WATCHING HIM MELT INTO SHADOW, NOCTURNA MURMURS TOO SOFTLY TO BE HEARD: "I WILL... AND I WILL BRING HIM GOOD NEWS ABOUT HIS FATHER."
13

WAYNE MANOR:
I...I FEEL AS IF I'M GOING QUIETLY INSANE -- WHAT WITH JASON GONE... AND MY DAUGHTER JULIA OFF ON HER OWN AFTER SO BRIEF A REUNION...
...AND NOW THE TROUBLE WITH MASTER BRUCE...
ALFRED.
EH--?!
WHO ARE YOU?
HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
SIMPLY TO SET YOUR MIND AT EASE, ALFRED, AND TO GET SOMETHING FROM THE BATCAVE.
MASTER BRUCE--! THANK GOD!
BUT THAT COSTUME--!
AND ALL THE REPORTS OF BATMAN TURNING CRIMINAL...
GREATLY EXAGGERATED, ALFRED, BUT EXPLANATIONS WILL HAVE TO WAIT.
RIGHT NOW, EVENTS ARE GATHERING BOTH SPEED AND FORCE.
QUITE SO, SIR.
GOTHAM GENERAL HOSPITAL:
THANKS FOR SITTIN' ROUND-THE-CLOCK GUARD OVER ME, COMMISH-- THIS LOUSY BULLET WOUND'S TAKIN' FOREVER TO HEAL...
14

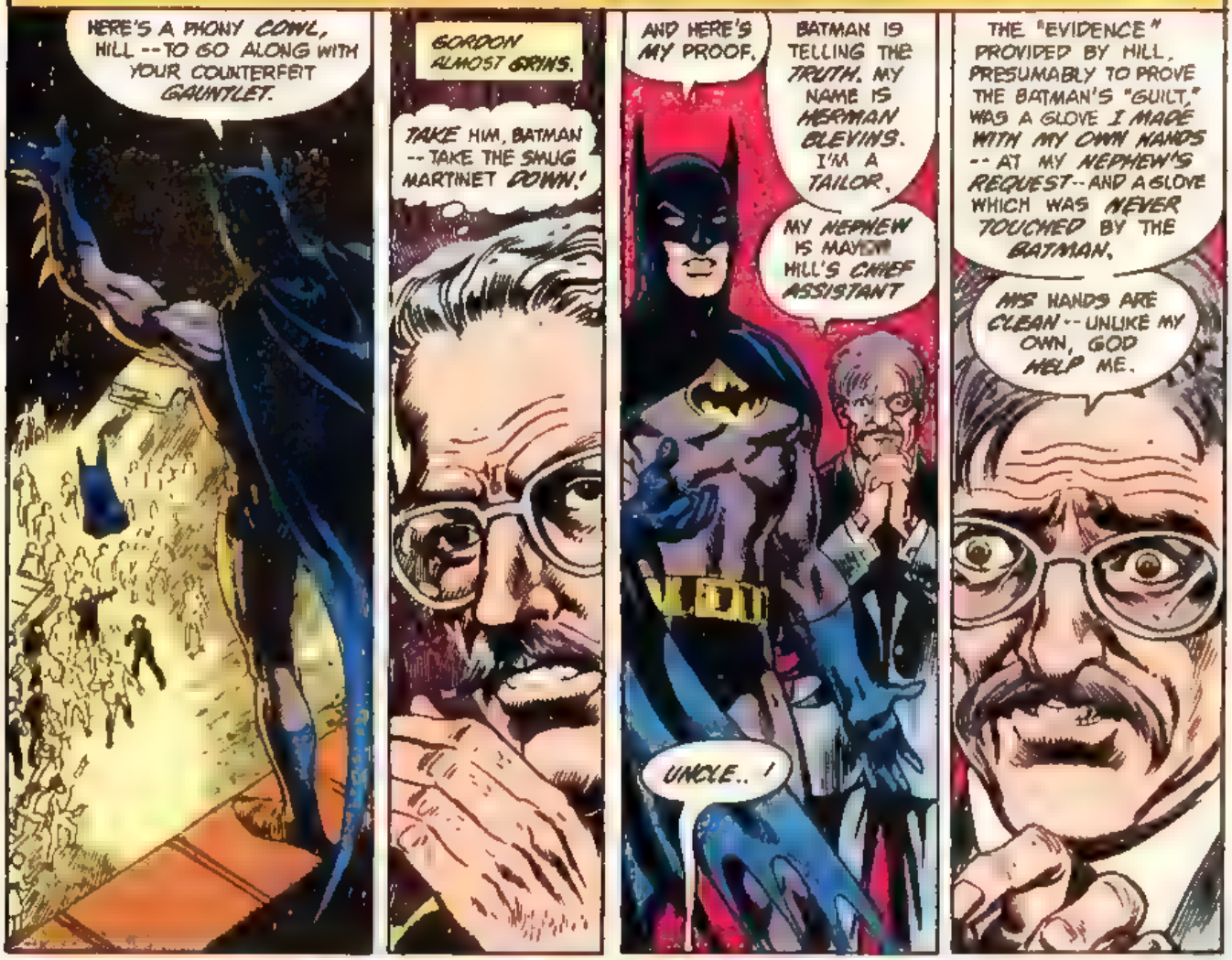

"AND NOW THAT HILL'S KICKED US OFF THE FORCE, I CAN'T EVEN TRUST THOSE BLUES OUTSIDE THE DOOR..."
;FZT:--WENZEL FUR WAREHOUSE--;FZT:--DOCK 32--;FZT:
INDEED, UNLESS HILL CAN PULL OFF SOME KIND OF MAGIC TRICK, I THINK WE CAN INCREASINGLY COUNT ON THE LOYALTY OF--
COMMISSIONER?
AT THIS POINT, BULLOCK, I SUSPECT THAT'S AN EXAGGERATION.
PUBLIC OPINION IS TURNING AGAINST HILL--AND I'M NOT SO SURE MANY COPS EVER BELIEVED HIS TRANSPARENT CHARGES AGAINST THE BATMAN AND ME...
I... I KNOW WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO DISCUSS POLICE BUSINESS WITH YOU, BUT... WELL, I THOUGHT YOU OUGHT TO KNOW...
IT SOUNDS LIKE MAYOR HILL'S GOT SOMETHING BIG COOKED UP ON THE DOCKS, AND... WELL, IF YOU WANT... I'M WILLING TO GIVE YOU A RIDE.
WELL, BULLOCK...?
GO ON, COMMISH.
YOU WERE RIGHT--THE OTHER MAN OUT THERE'LL KEEP A GOOD WATCH OVER ME.
AND BESIDES, I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
NOW YOU CAN.
GET WELL, BULLOCK--AND STAY THAT WAY.
YOU'RE A B-BRICK, COMMISH--AND THANKS, HUH?
15

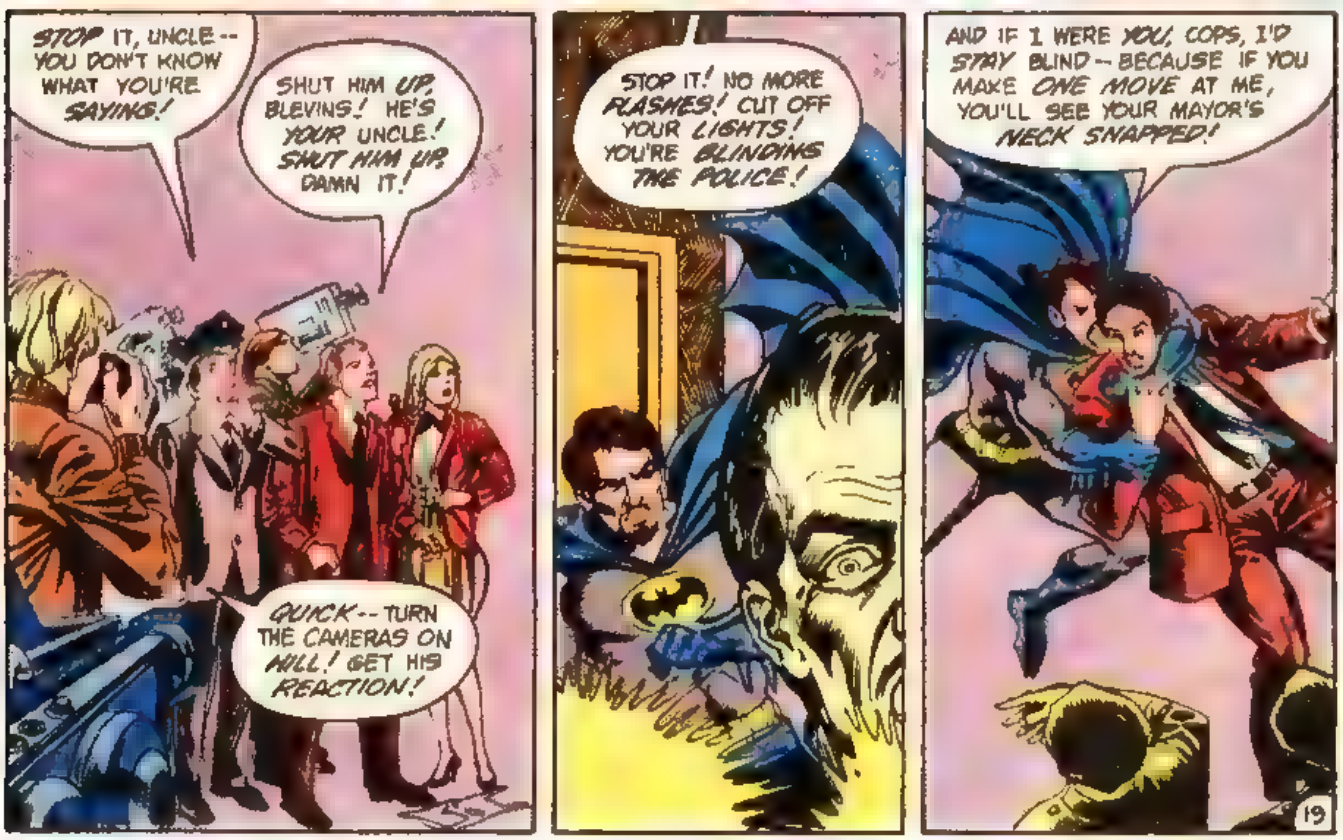
THE MENDEL FUR WAREHOUSE NEAR THE DOCKS, 11:17 PM:
THANKS, EDDIE -- HAVE A GOOD HAUL BACK TO THE GREAT WHITE NORTH.
RIGHT-- SEE YA NEXT THURSDAY.
FINALLY -- ALL THE FURS ARE INSIDE AND THE DRIVER'S LEAVING...
...AND SINCE THE NIGHT WATCHMAN HAS LOCKED THE LOADING BAY DOOR TIGHTER THAN A DRUM...
...I'LL SIMPLY GO TO THE SIDE DOOR AND--
SKRAK
THIS IS IT.
TELL THE CARS TO MAKE THEIR MOVES AND SEAL THE STREET
NOW -- HIT THE SEARCHLIGHTS!
WHAT THE--?!
15

THE REPORTERS GO WILD.
THERE! YOU SEE--?!
AROOGA! HE'S BEEN CAUGHT RED-HANDED!
AND BY GOD, HERE'S HIS MAGIC TRICK-- A RABBIT PULLED RIGHT OUT OF HIS HAT.
I... I CAN'T BELIEVE IT, COMMISSIONER... AFTER ALL THESE YEARS HE'S HELPED US FIGHT CRIME...
THE BATMAN REALLY IS A CRIMINAL-- JUST AS I'VE SAID!
NOTHING MORE THAN A COMMON THIEF--SHRINKING AWAY FROM YOUR LIGHTS LIKE A VAMPIRE FROM THE CROSS!
EXCEPT FOR ONE THING, MR. MAYOR...
HUH--?
ANTON KNIGHT--ONCE KNOWN AS THE THIEF OF NIGHT AND NOW AS NIGHT-SLAYER--IS NOT THE BATMAN...
17
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE FOLLOWING


I AM.
AND IT IS TRUE.
EVEN WERE HE NOT CLOAKED IN A RESERVE COSTUME TAKEN FROM THE BATCAVE, THE ENTIRE NIGHT WOULD KNOW IT IS TRUE...
THE BAT MAN
IS BACK -- AND ON ANGEL, WHERE HE BELONGS.
AND, AFTER A MOMENT OF HUSHED SHOCK...

... THE REPORTERS GO MORE THAN WILD, ACTUALLY CHEERING AS THEY CRANE THEIR NECKS TO CAPTURE THE HEROIC PERSPECTIVE OF HIS RETURN.


HERE'S A PHONY COWL, HILL -- TO GO ALONG WITH YOUR COUNTERFEIT GAUNTLET.
GORDON ALMOST GRINS.
TAKE HIM, BATMAN -- TAKE THE SMUG MARTINET DOWN!
AND HERE'S MY PROOF.
BATMAN IS TELLING THE TRUTH. MY NAME IS HERMAN BLEVINS. I'M A TAILOR.
MY NEPHEW IS MAYOR HILL'S CHIEF ASSISTANT
UNCLE..!
THE "EVIDENCE" PROVIDED BY HILL, PRESUMABLY TO PROVE THE BATMAN'S "GUILT," WAS A GLOVE I MADE WITH MY OWN HANDS -- AT MY NEPHEW'S REQUEST -- AND A GLOVE WHICH WAS NEVER TOUCHED BY THE BATMAN.
MY HANDS ARE CLEAN -- UNLIKE MY OWN, GOD HELP ME.


STOP IT, UNCLE -- YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING!
SHUT HIM UP, BLEVINS! HE'S YOUR UNCLE! SHUT HIM UP! DAMN IT!
QUICK -- TURN THE CAMERAS ON HILL! GET HIS REACTION!
STOP IT! NO MORE FLASHES! CUT OFF YOUR LIGHTS! YOU'RE BLINDING THE POLICE!
AND IF I WERE YOU, COPS, I'D STAY BLIND -- BECAUSE IF YOU MAKE ONE MOVE AT ME, YOU'LL SEE YOUR MAYOR'S NECK SNAPPED!

DON'T SHOOT! WE CAN'T RISK HITTING HILL!
THE BATMAN--WHY ISN'T HE DOING SOMETHING?
LOOK--HE'S GONE!
H-HE WAS STANDING RIGHT NEXT TO ME...
H-HOW DID HE DISAPPEAR LIKE THAT?
"HM-WHERE HAS HE GONE--?"
ALL RIGHT, HERE'S YOUR MAYOR!
AND NOW--
AND NOW, ANTON, YOU'RE TAKING A DIVE THE OTHER WAY!
SWOK
YOU COULDN'T MAKE ME BELIEVE I'M NIGHT-SLAYER --
--BUT I WILL ANSWER TO "KNIGHT-SLAYER."
HWAK
NO ONE KILLS THE NIGHT -- NOT EVEN YOU, BATMAN!
CHUD
STOP THEM!
THEY'RE CRAZY!
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HOLD YOUR FIRE, MEN!
YOU SAID IT, COMMISSIONER-- IT'S TOO DARK TO TELL WHO'S THE REAL BATMAN!
AND IN TANGLED CONFUSION, THEY BOTH HIT THE BLACK WATER.
YOU ALL RIGHT, HILL?
I... I'M ALIVE!
BUT ANATOMICALLY..?
I... FEEL... NOTHING.
THEN I GUESS YOU'LL BE COMING WITH ME NOW... AND WE WON'T NEED THE CUFFS, WILL WE?
NO, GORDON... I'M ALREADY BOUND TO MY FATE.
WELCOME BACK TO THE FORCE, COMMISSIONER!
TEN MINUTES LATER, DOWNRIVER...
AS SOON AS HE GOT AWAY FROM ME UNDERWATER, IT WAS HOPELESS... AND THE NIGHT IS AS MUCH HIS AS MINE.
HE COULD COME ASHORE ALMOST ANYWHERE.
IT WAS A GOOD PLAN, AND IT ALMOST WORKED RIGHT DOWN TO THE LAST DOTTED "i" AND CROSSED "t"...
ALMOST, BUT NOT QUITE.
STILL... IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK.
21

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

AND IF MY TIMING WAS JUST RIGHT, THEN AMANDA GROSCZ SAW ME LEAVE THE RITZ-CARLTON DRESSED AS NIGHT-SLAYER, WITH NOCTURNA IN TOW...
...MEANING JASON WILL BE BACK AS WELL.
Gotham Gazette
MAYOR FALLS IN SHAME BATMAN'S BACK--
-- BUT NIGHT-SLAYER ESCAPES
WE BROUGHT THIS... AN EXTRA...
A FITTING NAME FOR THE MAYOR -- HILL'S DESCENT WAS JUST AS STEEP AS HIS RISE.
I'M STILL CONFUSED.
YOU NEVER REALLY BELIEVED YOU WERE NIGHT-SLAYER?
OH, I DID, ROBIN -- FOR ABOUT AN HOUR, I GUESS. THAT GUNSHOT BOUNCED MY BRAIN HAYWIRE FOR A WHILE...
BUT WHEN MY HEAD FINALLY CLEARED, I SAW A WAY OF PROLONGING THE REVERSAL -- OF CAPITALIZING ON THE DOUBLE POSE -- TO MY OWN BENEFIT.
TO GOTHAM'S BENEFIT, BATMAN.
PERHAPS... BUT IT'S NOT YET -- NOT WITH THE NIGHT-SLAYER STILL AT LARGE... AND NOT WHILE THIS NIGHT STILL WEEPS.
NOW? WHERE'RE YOU GOING NOW--?
TO CLEAR THE BATMAN'S NAME.
BUT YOU ALREADY HAVE -- IT'S SPLASHED ALL OVER THE PAPERS.
SOME PEOPLE, ROBIN --
--CAN'T READ.
22

I... I CAME HERE, WILLING TO LET HIM GIVE ME TO THE POLICE...
...NOW THAT IT'S OVER AND--
MIGHTY BIG OF YOU, LADY, BUT YOU HEARD HIM-- IT'S NOT OVER--AND HE'S GOT SOMETHING ELSE ON HIS MIND.
YES... THEN I'LL LEAVE YOU, JASON... HERE... WHERE YOU BELONG.
FOR THIS ONE SUNLESS SPAN, AT LEAST, HE WILL SET ASIDE HIS MANTLE OF NIGHT-CREATURE...
KNOW ME, NOW, IN TRUTH.
AND HE WILL MAKE HER FANTASIES COME TRUE.
TINA...
YOU'VE KNOWN ME BEFORE...
OH BATMAN... YOU D-DON'T HAVE A MUSTACHE... AND YOU'RE JUST AS HANDSOME AS THE PRINCE I'VE ALWAYS IMAGINED.
IN THE MORNING HE WILL TELL HER ABOUT THE WAYNE FOUNDATION AND IT'S EXCELLENT FACILITIES, WHERE A BLIND PERSON MAY LIVE IN DIGNITY.
IN FAR GREATER DIGNITY, HER EYES GIVING TEARS BUT TAKING HOME OF THE DAWN'S LIGHT, SHE WILL REFUSE, PREFERRING HER SHACK AND HER DOG...
HE WILL LIGHT A BLIND GIRL'S CRUEL DARKNESS...
... FOREVER DAYDREAMING IN DARKNESS, PAINTING HER PRINCE, THE BATMAN, IN BRIGHT SHINING SHADES.

IN THE NEXT

'TEC AND BATMAN: THE CATWOMAN!